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$1.25 US
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UK 50p
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"THE CONFRONTATION" — PART 9 of 10

Twelve weeks (6 issues) ago, Razorfist tried his best to kill Wolverine. Now it's Wolvie's turn.

"BREAKING FAITH" — PART 9 OF 12

The attack by Lloyd Zahner and his mercenaries on Marea and her cultists has ended in disaster, with Monteiro dead and Zahner himself grotesquely disfigured by the cauterizing touch of the Man-Thing. For Marea, these events augur the coming of her Master's kingdom, the reign of Perfect Chaos on earth. The cultists, with prisoners Zahner and reporter Mickey Ditillio in tow, have begun a torchlight procession to the swamp for the final ritual to invoke the Master -- unaware that from Washington, D.C., Colonel Jody Choate has personally ordered their destruction.

A teenaged runaway whose latent abilities were twisted by involuntary injections of a synthetic drug -- he became a living doorway to darkness and keeper of the demon within.

As a child, Alejandro Montoya stood in helpless horror as his parents died while defending him against a mob of mutant haters. As an adult, the costumed El Aguila (The Eagle) seeks to prove himself worthy of their sacrifice.

MARVEL™ COMICS PRESENTS™ Vol. 1, No. 9, Late December, 1988. Published by MARVEL COMICS, A NEW WORLD COMPANY, James E. Galton, President, Stan Lee, Publisher, Michael Hobson, Group Vice-President, Milton Schiffman, Vice-President, Production. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 387 PARK AVENUE SOUTH, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016.
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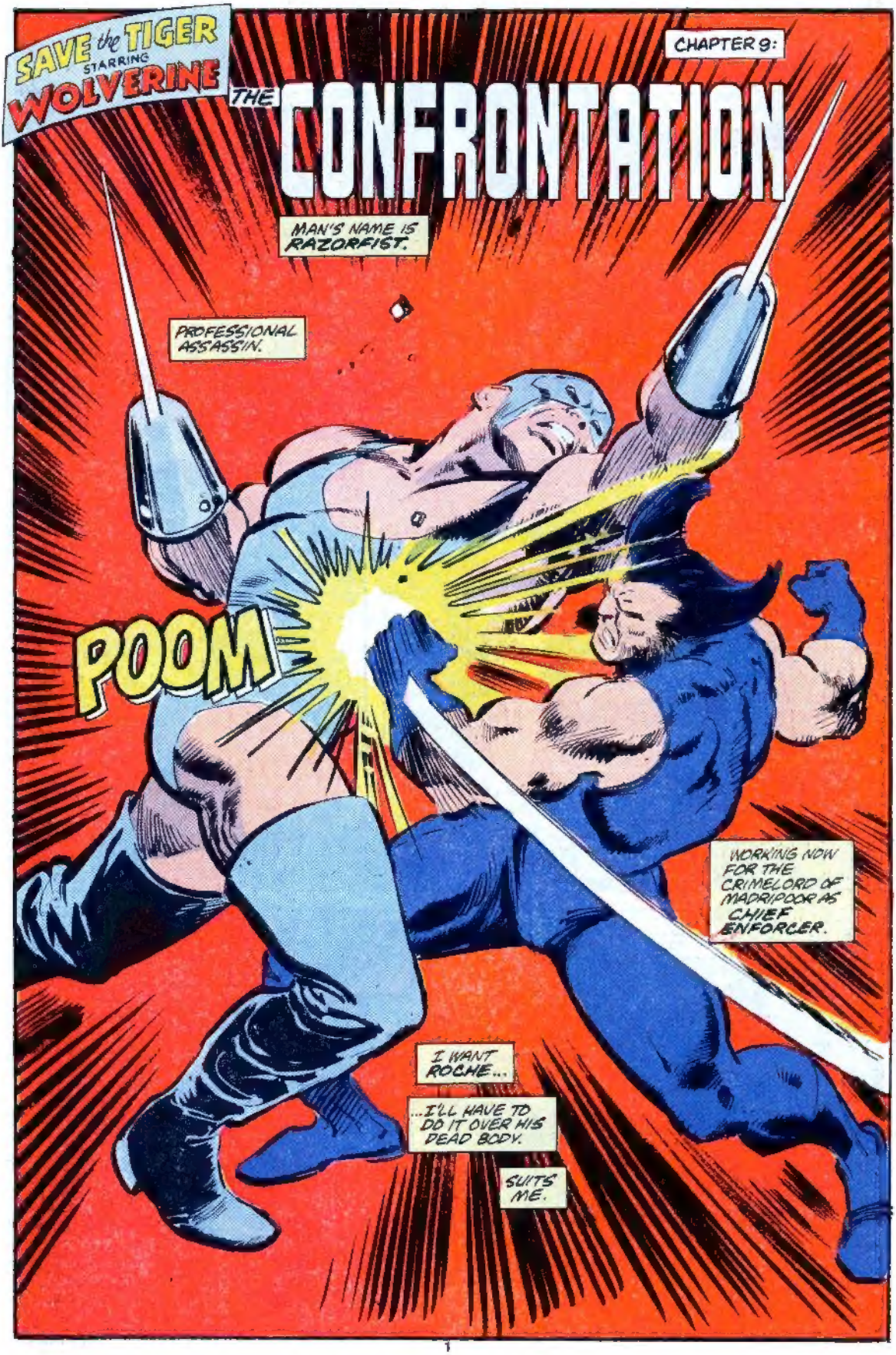
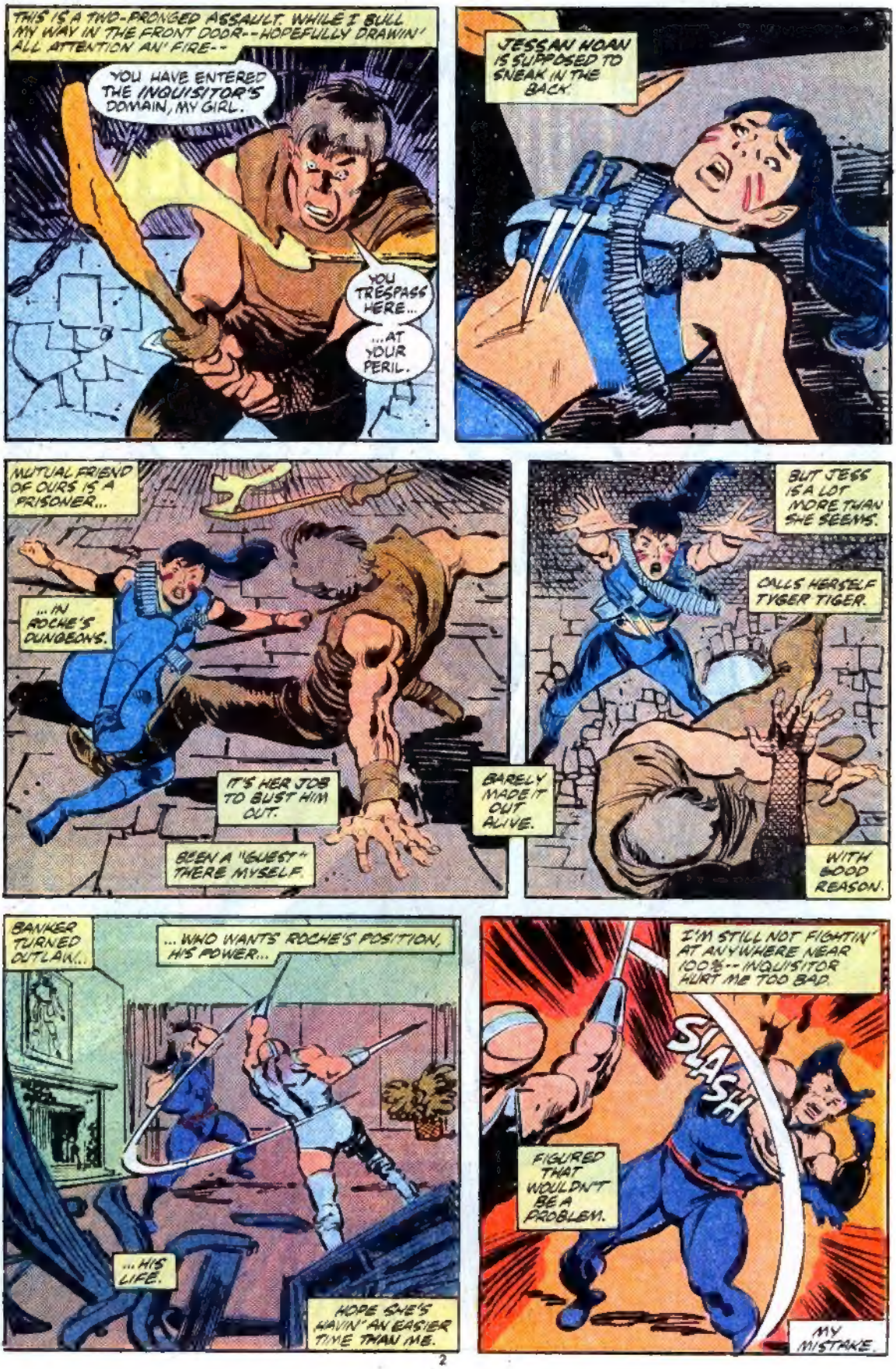
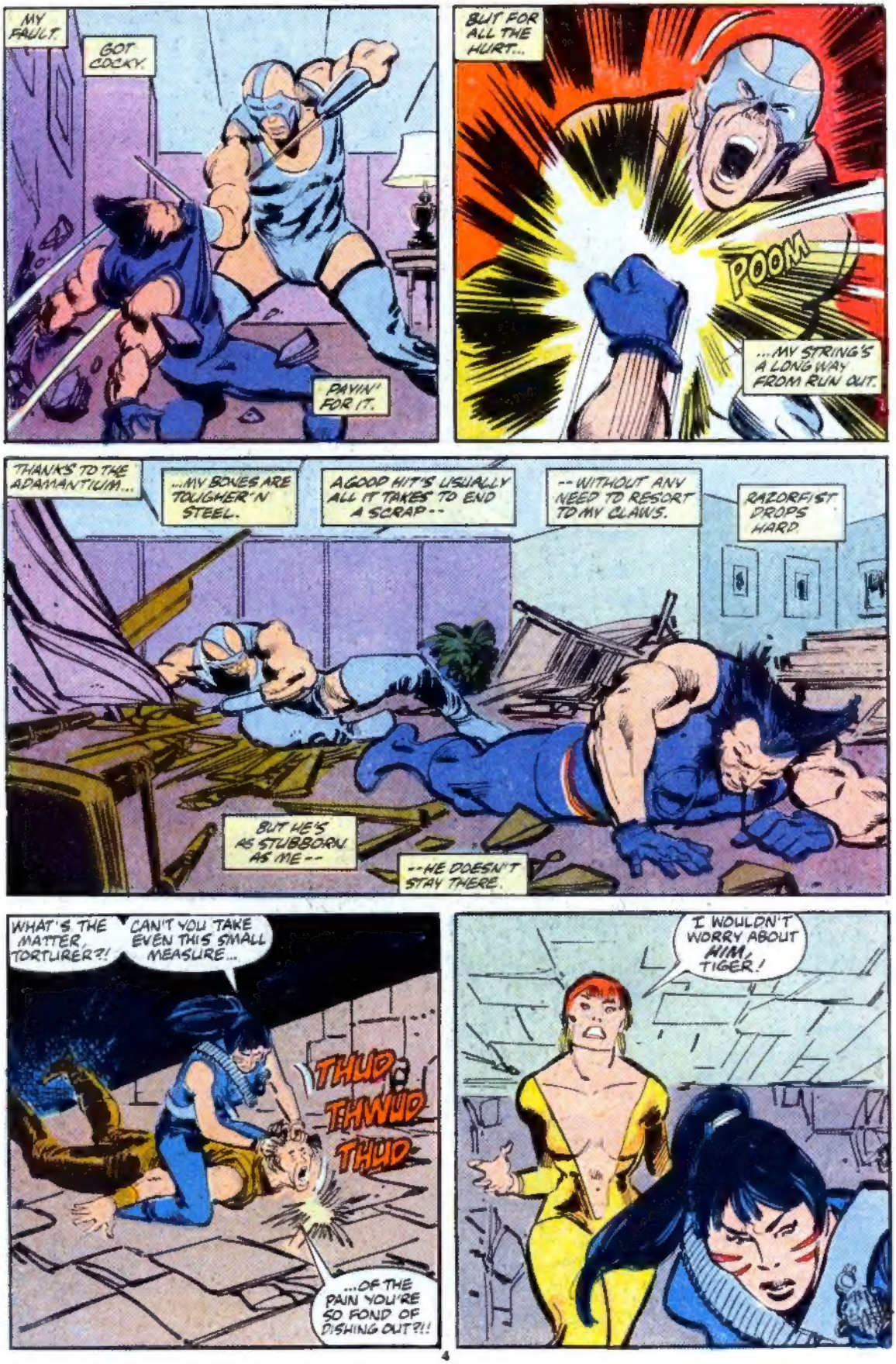
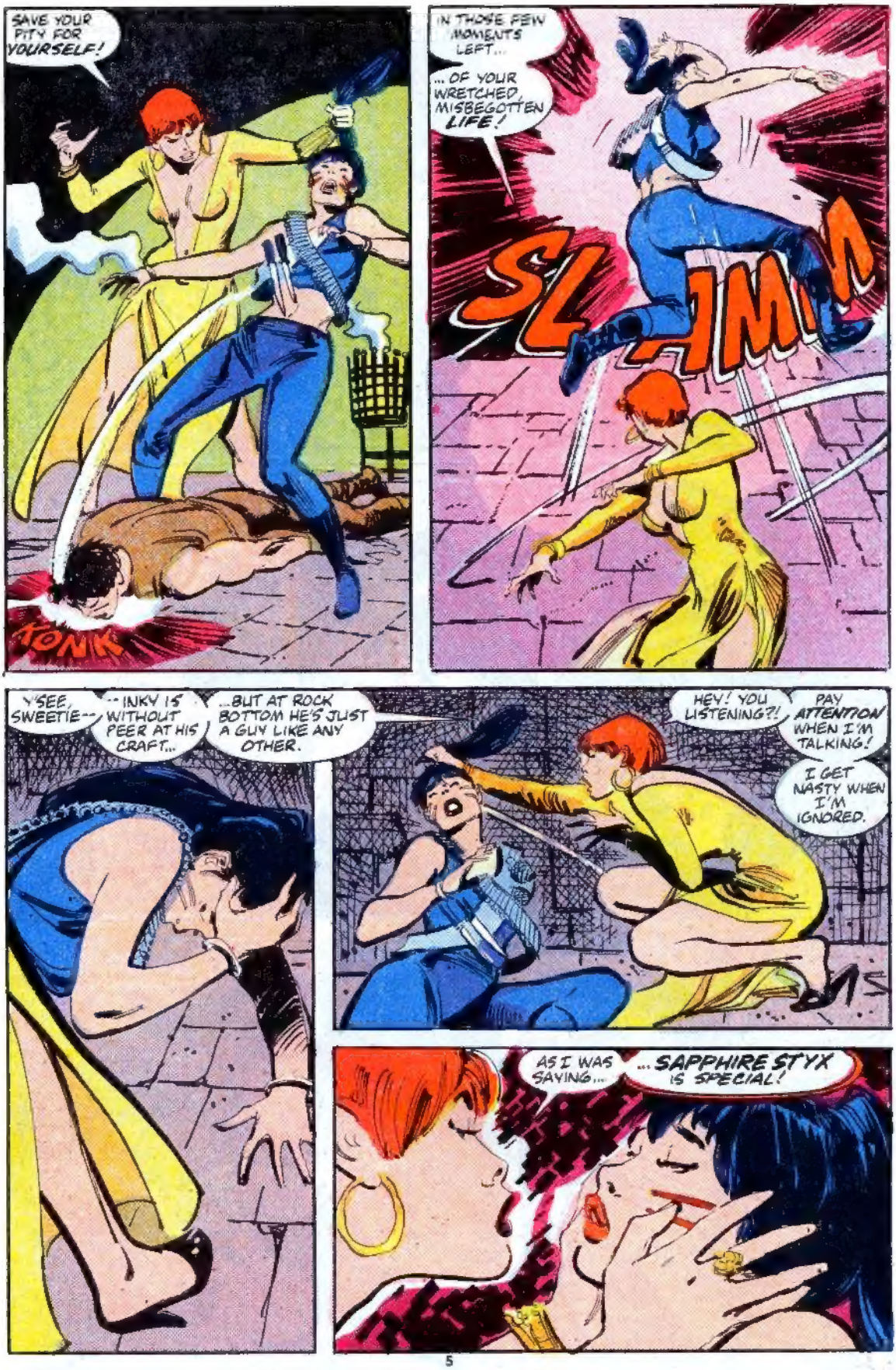

SAVE the TIGER
STARRING
WOLVERINE
CHAPTER 9:
THE CONFRONTATION
MAN'S NAME IS RAZORFIST.
PROFESSIONAL ASSASSIN.
POOM
WORKING NOW FOR THE CRIMELORD OF MADRIPOOR AS CHIEF ENFORCER.
I WANT ROCHE...
...I'LL HAVE TO DO IT OVER HIS DEAD BODY.
SUITS ME.


THIS IS A TWO-PRONGED ASSAULT. WHILE I BULL MY WAY IN THE FRONT DOOR--HOPEFULLY DRAWIN' ALL ATTENTION AN' FIRE--
YOU HAVE ENTERED THE INQUISITOR'S DOMAIN, MY GIRL.
YOU TRESPASS HERE...
...AT YOUR PERIL.
JESSAN NOAN IS SUPPOSED TO SNEAK IN THE BACK.
MUTUAL FRIEND OF OURS IS A PRISONER...
...IN ROCHE'S DUNGEONS.
IT'S HER JOB TO BUST HIM OUT.
BEEN A "GUEST" THERE MYSELF.
BARELY MADE IT OUT ALIVE.
BUT JESS IS A LOT MORE THAN SHE SEEMS.
CALLS HERSELF TYGER TIGER.
WITH GOOD REASON.
BANKER TURNED OUTLAW...
...WHO WANTS ROCHE'S POSITION, HIS POWER...
...HIS LIFE.
HOPE SHE'S HAVIN' AN EASIER TIME THAN ME.
I'M STILL NOT FIGHTIN' AT ANYWHERE NEAR 100%--INQUISITOR HURT ME TOO BAD.
SLASH
FIGURED THAT WOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM.
MY MISTAKE.

FIGURED I WAS UP AGAINST A BULLY-BOY WITH A GIMMICK--
--HIS HANDS REPLACED BY RAZOR-KEEN BLADES.
BUT THEN, WHAT AM I...
...WITH AN SKELETON AN ALLOY...
...OF BONE BONDED TO ADAMANTIUM TO MAKE IT VIRTUALLY UNBREAKABLE?
I'M A MUTANT...
...HE ISN'T.
HE DOESN'T SEEM TO NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE.
AFTER THAT FIRST SHOT...
SHOK
...HE DOESN'T LET ME GET CLOSE ENOUGH...
... FOR ANOTHER--
KWAK
--WHILE HIS BLADES CUT ME TO THE BONE.
STRENGTH MATCHES SPEED AND SKILL.
BRAM
NOW, WHAT MAKES ME A MUTANT IS A HEALING FACTOR...
...THAT'S PROOF AGAINST JUST ABOUT ANY WOUND.
DOESN'T MAKE ME INVULNERABLE--
--I CAN BE CUT, AND WHEN I AM, I BLEED--
--JUST FLAMIN' HARD TO KILL.
BUT RAZORFIST, HE SEEMS BOUND AN' DETERMINED TO MAKE THAT EXTRA EFFORT.


MY FAULT.
GOT COCKY.
PAYIN' FOR IT.
BUT FOR ALL THE HURT...
POOM
...MY STRING'S A LONG WAY FROM RUN OUT.
THANKS TO THE ADAMANTIUM...
...MY BONES ARE TOUGHER 'N STEEL.
A GOOD HIT'S USUALLY ALL IT TAKES TO END A SCRAP--
--WITHOUT ANY NEED TO RESORT TO MY CLAWS.
RAZORFIST DROPS HARD.
BUT HE'S AS STUBBORN AS ME--
--HE DOESN'T STAY THERE.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, TORTURER?!
CAN'T YOU TAKE EVEN THIS SMALL MEASURE...
THUD
THWUD
THUD
...OF THE PAIN YOU'RE SO FOND OF DISHING OUT?!!
I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT HIM, TIGER!


SAVE YOUR PITY FOR YOURSELF!
TONK
IN THOSE FEW MOMENTS LEFT...
... OF YOUR WRETCHED, MISBEGOTTEN LIFE!
SLAM
Y'SEE, SWEETIE--
--INKY IS WITHOUT PEER AT HIS CRAFT...
...BUT AT ROCK BOTTOM HE'S JUST A GUY LIKE ANY OTHER.
HEY! YOU LISTENING?!
PAY ATTENTION WHEN I'M TALKING!
I GET NASTY WHEN I'M IGNORED.
AS I WAS SAYING...
... SAPPHIRE STYX IS SPECIAL!

THERE'S NO LETUP TO RAZORFIST'S ATTACK.
NOT EVEN THE SPLIT-SECOND THAT'S ALL I NEED...
...TO GET MY BALANCE...
BAM
...PULL MY ACT TOGETHER.
SO I QUIT TRYING.
I LIVE ON THE LIFE-FORCES OF OTHERS.
WHEN I DRAIN 'EM DRY, THEY DIE.
YOU'RE TASTY, SWEETS--
--ALMOST AS DELECTABLE A FEAST AS PATCH.
NO!
TYGER TIGER IS NO ONE'S PREY VAMPIRE!
YAAAGH!
MY THROAT--
--BLEEDING--
--YOU--YOU BIT ME!
WHAT SORT OF MADWOMAN ARE YOU?!!

TIGER NOT SIMPLY IN NAME...
...BUT IN FACT!
YAIEAIEEEEEE
AND TIGERS KILL!
ROOM...
...SPINNING--
--STYX STOLE SO MUCH STRENGTH...
...HARDLY ANY LEFT...
...NO...
...CAN'T YIELD...
...WON'T LET THE WITCH BEAT ME...
SHE'S DOWN! WE CAN--!
FORGET THAT HELLCAT!
MY FACE--SHE BURNED MY FACE!
GET ME AWAY FROM HER, INQUISITOR--
--BEFORE SHE DOES ANYTHING WORSE!
LOOK'S BAD.
YOU FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT, WARRIOR...
...AS I KNEW YOU WOULD.
BUT THE END HAS COME...
...AS I KNEW IT WOULD.
MAKE PEACE WITH YOUR DEITIES, PATCH...
...WE SHALL NOT MEET AGAIN.
THAT, BUB...
...IS A FACT!
CLAWS. THREE TO A HAND. PURE ADAMANTIUM, HONED SO SHARP THEY'LL CUT THROUGH ANYTHING.
SNIKT

BUT THEY'LL ONLY CUT WHAT I CAN REACH.
RAZORFIST KEPT HIS DISTANCE.
SO I PLAYED "POSSUM" TO LURE HIM CLOSE.
NO SUBTLETY NOW, NO FANCY MOVES.
JUST BRUTE FORCE.
TWO BRUISERS, GIVING ALL THEY GOT.
WINNER TAKE ALL.
BECAUSE WHOEVER SLIPS FIRST...
...PAYS THE FORFEIT...
...WITH HIS LIFE!
NOW, AT LONG LAST...
...IT'S ROCHE'S TURN.
NEXT: THE RESOLUTION!

ELEMENTS OF TERROR
CHAPTER IX
BREAKING FAITH
THE MAN-THING
THE FIRST MISSILE REDUCES THE OLD INN TO FLYING DEBRIS AND MEMORIES
THE CULTISTS FLEE, IN A SWELL OF PANIC AND FEAR THAT PARALYZES THE SWAMP MONSTER
CHOOM
MICKEY DITILLIO PEELS HIMSELF OF THE SCREAMING AND TERROR TO REMOVE HIS BLINDFOLD
HIS HEART LEAPS AND HIS STOMACH TURNS AT WHAT HE SEES
SPUNG IS FRYING IN HIS OWN FAT PIXIE HER FAKE ELFIN FURS TRAILING FLAMES, HAS DESERTED HIM

BURN, BABY, BURN!
HIIOOO!
THEY MAY CALL ME A MERCENARY, BUT THIS I'C DO FOR FREE!
EAT HOT SURPLUS, SATANIST SCUM!
THE MISSILE IMPACTS
IN SOMETHING MOIST AND MUCKY
THOOP
AND FOR A MOMENT NOTHING HAPPENS
THEN -
KA-BOOM

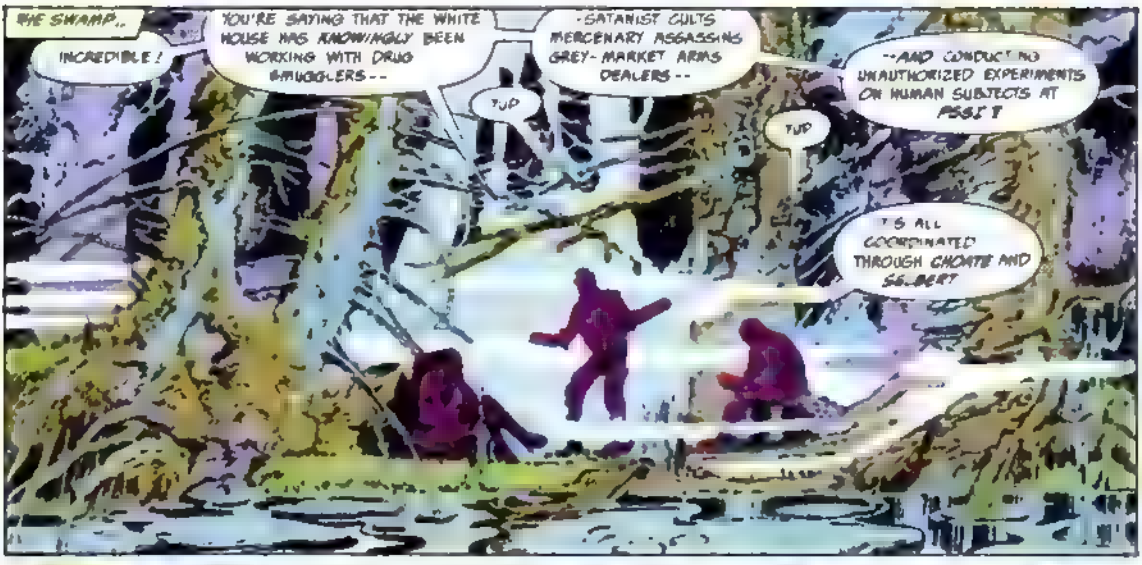
--AN' THAT'S THE NAME O' THAT LITTLE
WASHINGTON.
ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?! YOU CAN'T LEAVE WASHINGTON NOW!
THEY'RE WATCHING EVERY MOVE YOU MAKE!
YOU'LL BLOW THE ENTIRE OPERATION OUT OF THE WATER!
THE MATTER IS NO LONGER OPEN FOR DISCUSSION, BRASS.
I'VE MADE MY DECISION I'M GOING TO SPEARHEAD THE MISSION PERSONALLY.
VROOM
MY CAREER IS OVER. THE TEACHERS ARE TALLYING MY DEMERITS. IT'S THIS, OR A STRETCH CLEANING BLACKBOARDS.
IT DOESN'T MATTER, BRASS.
YOU ARE CRAZY!
THE EFFECTS OF THE JUICE ARE IRREVERSIBLE! DON'T YOU REALIZE--
STEEL!
GOODBYE, BRASS.
STEEL--?!
CLICK
COLONEL JODY CHOATE DESERVES BETTER THAN THAT
IF HISTORY REMEMBERS ME, LET IT BE AS A MAN WHO GAVE ALL IN SERVICE TO HIS COUNTRY

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA
WHAM!
SMASH!
SMASH!
WHAM!
KLANG!
KRUNCH!
DOOR WILL BREAK -- OR I WILL!
DOOR BREAKS -- YOU BREAK, DR LIMEY PIGSLOB!!
YOU!!
ME -- YOU'VE MADE YOURSELF QUITE CLEAR, OLD CHUM BUT I DO WISH YOU'D CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVE --
--COOPERATION, I MEAN!
McDONALD?
THERE'S A GREAT DEAL WE STILL NEED TO KNOW - IN THE INTEREST OF SCIENCE, RAILSBACK
FOR EXAMPLE EXCEPT FOR YOUR THUS FAR BEASTLY BEHAVIOR, WE'RE UNABLE TO GAUGE THE EFFECTS OF THE SALLIS SERUM ON THE SUBJECT'S INTELLECT.
COMMENT?
NEITHER MY COMPREHENSION NOR MY MEMORY HAS BEEN DAMAGED, McDONALD
I FULLY RECALL WHOM I WISH TO KILL -- AND WHY
WELL SPOKEN DOCTOR THANK YOU
NOT TAKIN IT REAL WELL IS HE?
WOULD YOU?
I WOULD PREFER THAT STEEL VIEW HIM ALIVE --
BUT GET THE A/C CONDITIONING READY JUST IN CASE

THE SWAMP..
..TURNED ON ME TRIED TO KILL
PAY FOR IT . RIP THEIR FACES OFF
TEETH IN THEIR EYES I'LL
SHUT UP, ZAHNER.
YOUR MISSIONS, YOUR MEN, YOUR OLD LOYALTIES... ALL MEAN NOTHING
THEY NEVER DID
WE WERE MEANT FOR THE MASTER
WHA
FOR YOU, THEN
O MESSENGER OF MY MASTER YOU HAVE SHOWN ME THE PATH OF CHAOS
YOU HAVE SHOWN ME THE PATH THROUGH FIRE INTO THE STORM
.. AND IN THE NAME OF ALL THINGS UNHOLY, I ACCEPT THIS ONE WHOM I DESPISE ABOVE ALL--
--AS MY CONSORT
COME TO ME, ZAHNER
BE ONE WITH ME
SPLUSH
MAKE ME HIS
SUPPOSE YOU CONSUMMATE THE RELATIONSHIP LATER--
AND GIVE ME SOME ANSWERS NOW!
PUT THAT DOWN--!
YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO DISTURB THIS RITUAL--
OR TO DEBASE THAT RELIC WITH YOUR TOUCH!

WASHINGTON...
USE ME GIVE ME THE STORY

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA
SOME HOURS LATER
YOU'LL FIND EVERYTHING IN ORDER COLONEL JUST AS YOU SPECIFIED
SIX DOSES EACH IN ITS OWN SYRINGE, HERMETICALLY PACKED FOR TRANSPORT
HAS DIXON ARRIVED YET?
HE'S EXPECTED MOMENTARILY
WHY DON'T YOU SIMPLY TAKE THE LEAR JET TO COSTA DINORA
CAN'T COMPANY MARKINGS.
I DON'T WANT AN INFECTION BETWEEN THIS TRIP AND THE MATTER BEFORE CONGRESS
SHOULD THE PLANE HAPPEN TO GO DOWN
RESTRICTE
LET'S NOT WASTE ANY TIME DOCTOR WHILE WE'RE WAITING FOR DIXON YOU CAN SHOW ME HOW RAJSBAUM TURNED OUT
AND PREPARE ONE MORE DOSE OF THE SERUM
YOU'LL ADMINISTER MINE ON THE PLANE


THE SWAMP..
INCREDIBLE!
YOU'RE SAYING THAT THE WHITE HOUSE HAS KNOWINGLY BEEN WORKING WITH DRUG SMUGGLERS--
-SATANIST CULTS MERCENARY ASSASSINS GREY-MARKET ARMS DEALERS--
TUD
--AND CONDUCTING UNAUTHORIZED EXPERIMENTS ON HUMAN SUBJECTS AT PSI T
TUD
IT'S ALL COORDINATED THROUGH CHOATE AND SILBERT

WHERE THE HEAVEN I PHONE?
YOU HAVE GOT TO TELL THIS STORY TO MY EDITOR
HOTEL ABOUT A MILE
I AM NOT LEAVING I MUST STAY AND WAIT
FOR A SIGN FROM THE MASTER

WELL BE AS YOU BACK THEN BUT THE STORY CAN'T RUN WITHOUT TWO SOURCES TO CONFIRM IT.
I'M PROUD OF IT AS DOING YOUR BIT FOR CHAOS.

CHAOS DOESN'T NEED ME TO DO IT IF YOU COULD SEE ITS PERFECTION, AS I HAVE, YOU'D KNOW THAT
I ONLY WANT TO BE PART OF THE GLORY--

AND SO THE POWER OF THE ANCIENT ONES GROWS AND SEEKS TO RECLAIM ITS WORLD.
TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

CLOAK
"I CAME TO BE A HERO.
"AS I TELEPORT FROM THE DARKNESS INTO THE HALF-LIGHT OF THE RESCUE SITE, I SEE THOSE BELOW GATHERED TO RESCUE A GIRL FROM THE PIT THAT HAS BECOME HER PRISON.
"THEY ARE HEROES.
"I'VE COME TONIGHT TO HELP THEM, BUT THEY DON'T SEE THAT. THEY SEE ONLY THEIR OWN FEAR, AND IN FEAR, THEY ATTACK.
IN THE DARK
RATAT-AT-AT-A-TAT
"THEIR BULLETS ARE NOTHING, AS I ABSORB THEM INTO THE DARKNESS OF MY CLOAK. ANGRY, FRIGHTENED FOOLS, THEY CAN'T SEE ME AS I AM. I AM NOT A MONSTER YET, THEY MAKE ME AS ONE--"

"I SHOULD'VE EXPECTED THEIR FEAR. I *INSPIRE* FEAR.
"I USED MY DEMONIC IMAGE TO PREY UPON CRIMINALS LIKE THOSE WHO MADE ME THIS--A CREATURE OF DARKNESS WHO FEEDS ON THE LIVING LIGHT OF OTHERS. AFTER A TIME, EVEN ***I BELIEVED*** MY IMAGE.
"I BECAME A MONSTER."
...A MONSTROUS TASK, TRYING TO EXCAVATE INTO THE WELL SHAFT ITSELF, WITHOUT COLLAPSING THE TUNNEL IN ON THREE-YEAR-OLD SARA.
THE SITUATION GROWS MORE DANGEROUS NOW, AS STORM CLOUDS MOVE IN, PROMISING A HEAVY RAINFALL--ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS IN THIS AREA, OFTEN PRONE TO FLASH-FLOODING.
"BUT I WANTED TO BE A HERO.
I COULD SAVE HER
IT'D BE A SIMPLE MATTER OF TELEPORTING DOWN THE WELL TO HER AND SLIPPING BACK, SATED NOW ON THE LIVING LIGHT OF MY PARTNER, DAGGER. THE RESCUE WOULDN'T PUT THE ***GIRL*** IN ANY DANGER OF MY FEEDING ON ***HER*** LIGHT!
AND DAGGER, MY ANGEL OF LIGHT, I'D PROVE TO YOU THAT I AM NOT A MONSTER.
...AND THAT I AM WORTHY OF ***YOUR LOVE.***
KRAK-A-THOOM!
...TRULY A LABOR OF LOVE, IN THIS FOURTH HOUR, AS WORKERS SPEED THEIR EFFORTS TO SAVE SARA BEFORE THE STORM WORSENS.

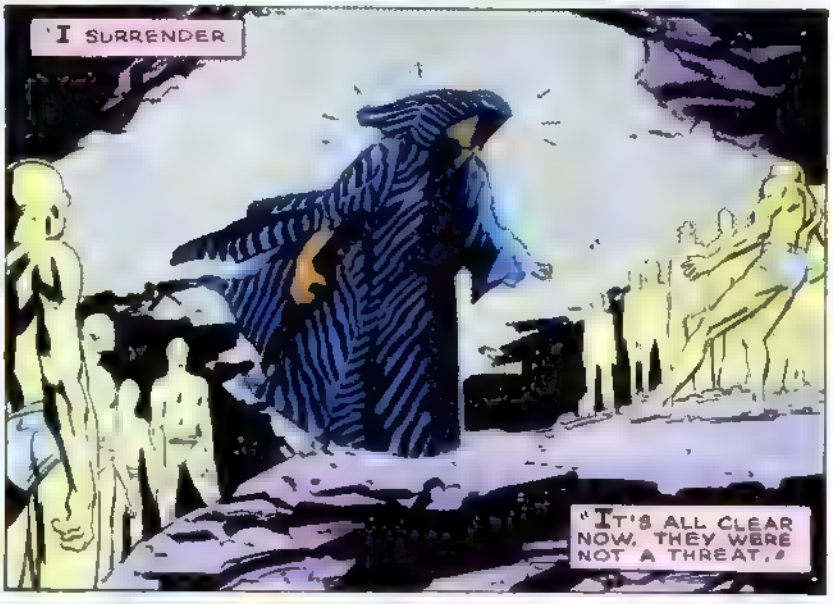
THERE SEEMS TO BE SOME EXCITEMENT BEHIND US-
--SOMETHING UP THERE ON THAT WATER TOWER / A BAT, OR A VULTURE?
A DEMON? IS THAT WHAT YOU BLIND FOOLS SEE?
WITH A SWEEP OF MY CAPE I COULD PULL YOU ALL INTO MY DARKNESS AND FEED ON THE LIGHT WHICH KEEPS YOU ALIVE, SHOWING YOU THE DARKNESS IN YOUR OWN SOULS!
"BUT FEAR IS NO CAUSE FOR AGGRESSION--ON THEIR PART OR MINE--AND I HAVE OTHER WORK THIS NIGHT."
WHAT THE DEVIL...?
NAW, BUT AWFUL CLOSE...
I TELEPORT TO THE BOTTOM --THROUGH A PASSAGE TOO NARROW FOR ANY BUT A SMALL CHILD.
BUT WHERE IS SHE?
A SHOE-- HER SHOE! SHE WAS HERE, BUT MUST HAVE WANDERED OFF --I MUST FIND HER BEFORE THE STORM WITHOUT WORSENS...
...BEFORE MY HUNGER RETURNS.
"I'VE COME THIS FAR-- I MUST FOLLOW

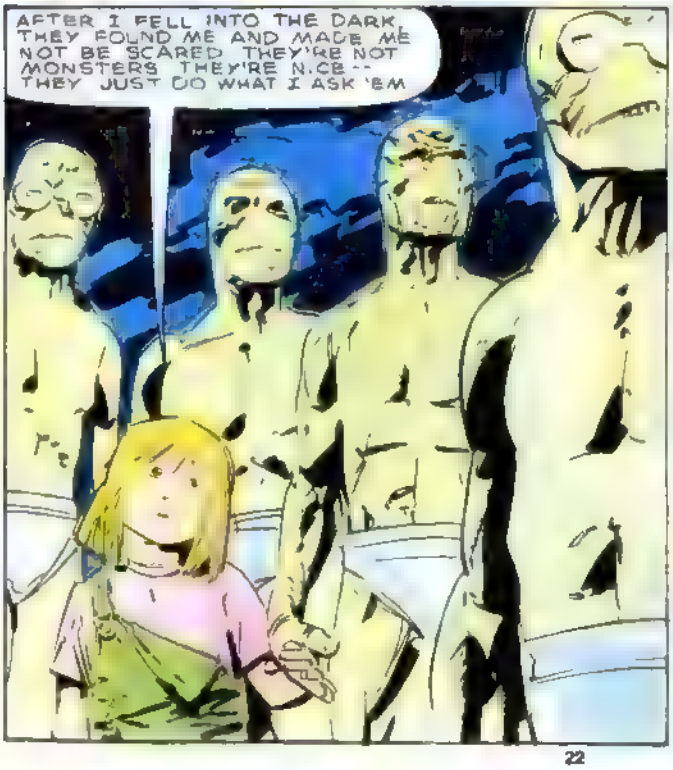
"AS A CHILD, I SCOFFED AT MY MOTHER'S TALES OF GOBLINS AND THE BOGEYMAN. I REALIZED EARLY ON THAT THE TRUE MONSTERS OF THE WORLD LOOKED JUST LIKE EVERY-ONE ELSE--AND DREW SOME MINOR COMFORT FROM THIS
UNTIL NOW
STOP, VILE DEMONS! LET HER GO! THE GIRL IS MINE, AND YOU'LL NOT HAVE HER!
HER TRAIL LEADS--
--THERE! SOME KIND OF... CREATURES HAVE HER!
COME, ENTER MY CLOAK, CREATURES! THE DARKNESS AWAITS YOU!
"THEY SPRING UP TEN FOR EVERY ONE I TAKE IN--
"WHILE OTHERS MAKE OFF WITH SARA! I'VE GOT TO ABSORB THE LIGHT FROM THESE CREATURES, AND USE THEIR LIGHT TO GET PAST THEM!
BUT SOMETHING IS WRONG! I SHOULD BE GAINING STRENGTH, DRAINING THE LIGHT OF THESE CREATURES--
"--BUT INSTEAD I'M WEAKENING!
SARA! GET AWAY.

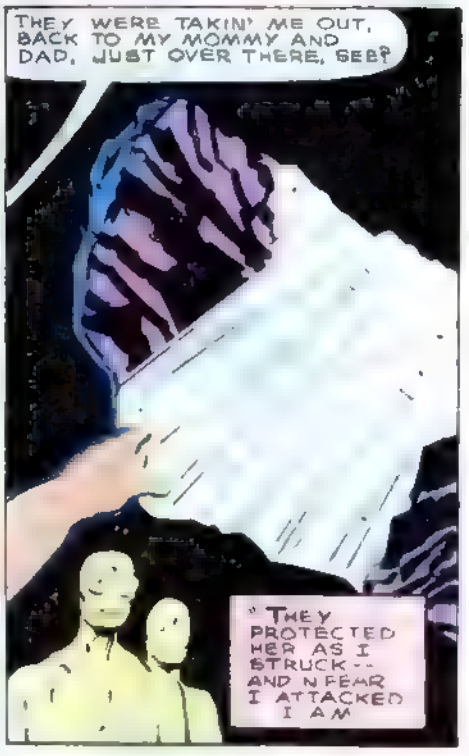
YOU GET AWAY, YOU OL' MONSTER! LEAVE MY FRIENDS ALONE!
"MONSTER?
"I AM NOT A MONSTER.
"SOMETHING IS TERRIBLY WRONG. I'M GAINING NO STRENGTH FROM THESE 'GOBLINS'--THEY ARE DEVOID OF LIGHT!
"YET, I SENSE NO DARKNESS WITHIN THEM EITHER! THEY ARE CLEAN SLATES, NEITHER GOOD OR EVIL, AND SO IMMUNE TO MY POWER!
"BUT I...AM AT THEIR MERCY
SARA, PLEASE! THESE CREATURES--THEY'RE TAKING YOU AWAY! I'VE COME TO RETURN YOU TO THE SURFACE, TO THOSE WHO LOVE YOU!
--TO SAVE YOU!

"NO GOOD--THEY'RE TOO MANY AND I'M WEAKENING!
SARA, TAKE MY HAND! THESE MONSTERS...
THEY RE NOT MONSTERS, THEY'RE MY FRIENDS.
DON'T HURT THEM, AND THEY WON'T FIGHT YOU!

"IF SHE IS WRONG, I AM LOST. I SEE THE LIGHT BEHIND HER EYES, THE LIGHT I WOULD CONSUME, AND I SEE THE TRUE MONSTER


I SURRENDER
"IT'S ALL CLEAR NOW. THEY WERE NOT A THREAT."


AFTER I FELL INTO THE DARK, THEY FOUND ME AND MADE ME NOT BE SCARED. THEY'RE NOT MONSTERS. THEY'RE NICE -- THEY JUST DO WHAT I ASK 'EM


THEY WERE TAKIN' ME OUT, BACK TO MY MOMMY AND DAD, JUST OVER THERE, SEE?
"THEY PROTECTED HER AS I STRUCK -- AND IN FEAR I ATTACKED I AM

"THAT SOUND, LIKE FAR-OFF THUNDER--THE URGENCY OF MY MISSION COMES BACK TO ME
FFFFFFFFFFFF
"THE CREATURES SCURRY FEARFULLY, KNOWING OF THE STORM OUTSIDE, AND WHAT THE NOISE PORTENDS.
FFFFFRRRRRRR
KNOWING THIS AREA IS PRONE TO FLASH-FLOODS, ABOVE AND UNDER GROUND..."
FLOOD! SARA, IN SECONDS THE RAINS WILL HAVE FILLED THESE CAVERNS WITH WATER!
"...AND THE EXIT SO CLOSE, IS STILL FARTHER THAN THE ONCOMING WALL OF WATER...!
YOU MUST GUIDE YOUR FRIENDS INTO MY CLOAK! I'LL TRY TO SAVE YOU ALL BEFORE IT HITS!
BUT ONCE IN MY DARKNESS, WHO WILL SAVE HER? I WILL NOT FEED ON HER. I AM NOT...
SARA, GATHER YOUR FRIENDS TIGHTLY AROUND YOU. THEY WILL PROTECT YOU... FROM THE DARK.
"AND THE THINGS THAT GO CRASH IN THE NIGHT
RRRRVROOOO

"THOUGH THERE'S NOTHING THERE THAT ISN'T THERE IN THE LIGHT."
WEE! THAT WAS FUN! THANKS, MISTER...
SARA, AT THE FOOT OF THE HILL... YOU'LL FIND YOUR PARENTS
GO TO THEM.
'KAY.
THANKS, MISTER, FER HELPING ME AN' MY FRIENDS. YER PRETTY NEAT. SORRY YOU GOT HURT
"I AM NOT HURT
"I'M BETTER THAN I'VE BEEN IN A LONG TIME. HEVING FACED THE DARK THAT I SEE, AND THE DARK THAT I AM
AND I HAVE SEEN THE LIGHT.
I AM A HERO."

END

AGUILA
PIECE OF CAKE!
TWENTY YEARS AGO, YOUNG ALEJANDRO MONTOYA ROAMED THE STREETS OF THIS SMALL SPANISH VILLAGE. HE WAS A STORY-BOOK STREET URCHIN, BEGGING FOR FOOD... LIVING ONLY BY THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS.
VERY LITTLE HAS CHANGED DURING THE TWO DECADES HE'S SPENT IN AMERICA. EXCEPT THAT NOW HE'S A SELF-MADE MILLIONAIRE WHO HAS RETURNED TO BECOME HIS PEOPLE'S GREATEST CHAMPION... EL AGUILA!
Cantilla
Corona
Cafe Valencia
OH, AND THE WINDMILL IS NEW.
...AND STAY OUT!
(AND THERE'S HARDLY EVER THREE THUGS TOSSED IN THE CENTER OF TOWN.)
SI, SENOR AGUILA! SI!
WE'LL STAY OUT! MUCHAS GRACIAS FOR SPARING OUR WORTHLESS LIVES
OUT WE ARE, AND OUT WE WILL STAY SI!
BESIDES THAT, HOWEVER, NOTHING HAS CHANGED.
REALLY.
* ENTIRE STORY TRANSLATED FROM SPANISH

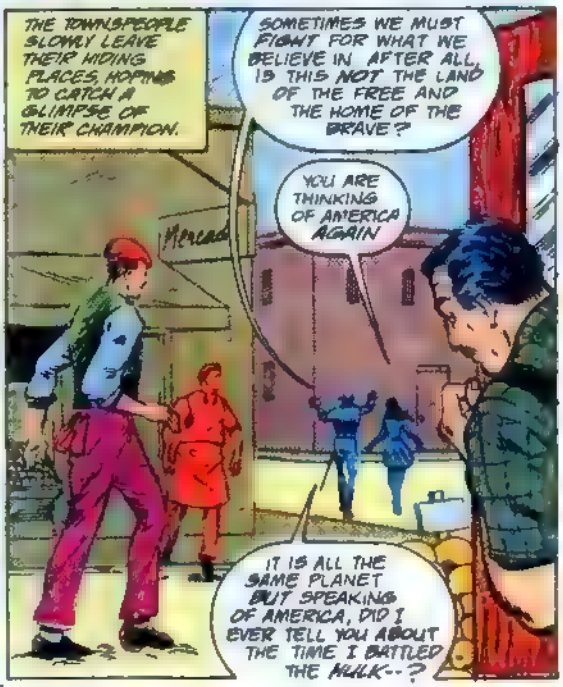
I SHOULD MAKE YOU CRAWL BACK TO YOUR PEN LIKE THE SQUEALING PIGLETS THAT YOU ARE!
INSTEAD, YOU ARE TO RUN BACK TO YOUR BEARDLESS SHEER HERDER OF A BOSS! TELL HIM THE PEOPLE OF SAN ELAINYA HAVE NO FURTHER NEED OF HIS "PROTECTION"!
- NO FURTHER NEED- GOT IT!
"..SQUEALING PIGLETS.."
"..BEARDLESS SHEER HERDER.."

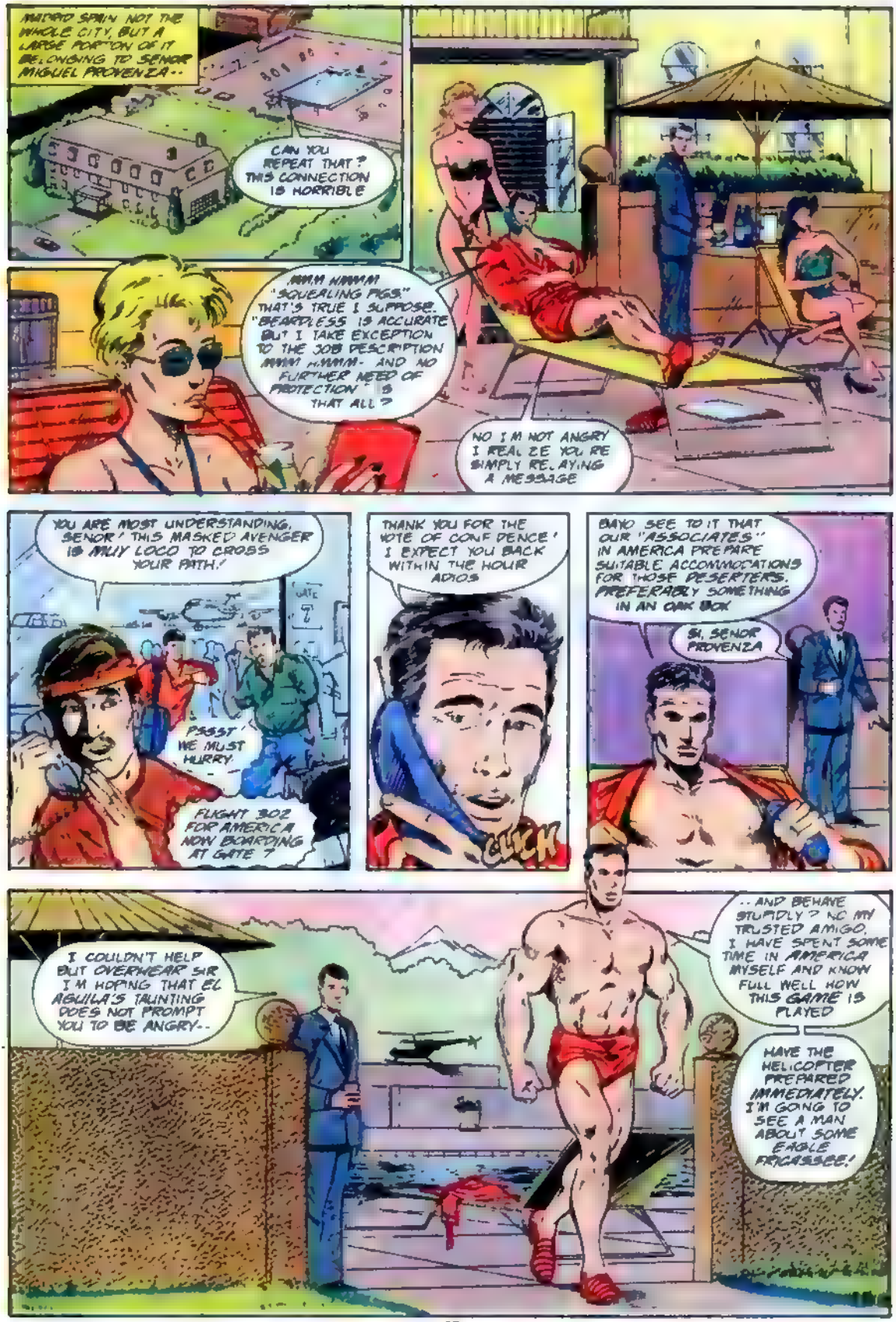
BUENO! BE SURE TO USE LITTLE WORDS SO THAT HE--
PLEASE, COUSIN-- YOU ARE ONLY MAKING THINGS WORSE!

NONSENSE, MIGDALIA! IN AMERICA, ALL THE SUPER HEROES TAUNT THEIR ADVERSARIES! IT MAKES THEM ANGRY AND STUPID
YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE I SEE BEHAVING STUPIDLY!

I CONTACTED YOU IN AMERICA BECAUSE I THOUGHT YOU COULD USE YOUR INFLUENCE AS A WEALTHY BUSINESSMAN TO FREE US FROM THE RULE OF THE CONQUISTADOR!
IF I THOUGHT FOR A MOMENT THAT YOU WERE A "SUPER HERO"--"

RELAX, LITTLE BIRD-- I DO THIS SORT OF THING ALL THE TIME IN THE STATES. IT WILL BE A PIECE OF CAKE!
Cafe Valmaa
LET US HOPE IT IS NOT A PIECE ON WHICH WE'LL CHOKE


THE TOWNSPEOPLE SLOWLY LEAVE THEIR HIDING PLACES, HOPING TO CATCH A GLIMPSE OF THEIR CHAMPION.
SOMETIMES WE MUST FIGHT FOR WHAT WE BELIEVE IN. AFTER ALL, IS THIS NOT THE LAND OF THE FREE AND THE HOME OF THE BRAVE?
YOU ARE THINKING OF AMERICA AGAIN
Mercado
IT IS ALL THE SAME PLANET BUT SPEAKING OF AMERICA, DID I EVER TELL YOU ABOUT THE TIME I BATTLED THE HULK--?


MADRID SPAIN NOT THE WHOLE CITY, BUT A LARGE PORTION OF IT BELONGING TO SENOR MIGUEL PROVENZA..
CAN YOU REPEAT THAT? THIS CONNECTION IS HORRIBLE
MMM MMMM "SQUEALING PIGS" THAT'S TRUE I SUPPOSE. "BEARDLESS" IS ACCURATE BUT I TAKE EXCEPTION TO THE JOB DESCRIPTION MMM MMMM- AND NO FURTHER NEED OF PROTECTION" IS THAT ALL?
NO I'M NOT ANGRY I REALIZE YOU'RE SIMPLY RELAYING A MESSAGE
YOU ARE MOST UNDERSTANDING, SENOR! THIS MASKED AVENGER IS MUY LOCO TO CROSS YOUR PATH!
PSSST! WE MUST HURRY
FLIGHT 302 FOR AMERICA NOW BOARDING AT GATE 7
GATE 7
THANK YOU FOR THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE! I EXPECT YOU BACK WITHIN THE HOUR ADIOS
CLICK
BAYO SEE TO IT THAT OUR "ASSOCIATES" IN AMERICA PREPARE SUITABLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THOSE DESERTERS. PREFERABLY SOMETHING IN AN OAK BOX
SI, SENOR PROVENZA
I COULDN'T HELP BUT OVERHEAR SIR I'M HOPING THAT EL AGUILA'S TAUNTING DOES NOT PROMPT YOU TO BE ANGRY..
..AND BEHAVE STUPIDLY? NO MY TRUSTED AMIGO, I HAVE SPENT SOME TIME IN AMERICA MYSELF AND KNOW FULL WELL HOW THIS GAME IS PLAYED
HAVE THE HELICOPTER PREPARED IMMEDIATELY. I'M GOING TO SEE A MAN ABOUT SOME EAGLE FRICASSEE!

LATER, IN A SMALL FOREST JUST OUTSIDE SAN ELAINDA..
TELL ME, ALEJANDRO-- HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE HOME AGAIN?
"HOME?" I DON'T KNOW THAT I'VE EVER TRULY FELT LIKE I BELONGED HERE-- OR ANYWHERE-- SINCE THE DEATH OF MY PARENTS.
YOU MUST STOP BLAMING YOURSELF YOUR PARENTS KNEW THAT WHAT THEY WERE DOING WAS DANGEROUS THEY GAVE THEIR LIVES WILLINGLY, SO THAT YOU MIGHT LIVE TO BECOME-
A SWASHBUCKLING ADVENTURER WHO IS ONLY AS GOOD AS HIS LAST VICTORY?
OKAY, SO MAYBE THEY DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE COSTUME AND THE SILLY NAME, BUT I'M SURE THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN PROUD OF YOUR VOCATION AS A DEFENDER OF THE PEOPLE
ARE YOU, LITTLE BIRD? I OFTEN WONDER IF I'VE FULFILLED THEIR DREAMS SOMETIMES I THINK ABOUT IT IN THE MIDDLE OF A BATTLE WITH ONE SUPER VILLAIN OR THE OTHER
THESE SUPER-VILLAINS COUSIN- DO THEY EVER ATTACK UN-EXPECTEDLY FROM HIGH TECH REMOTE-CONTROL HELICOPTERS?
I SUPPOSE SOMETIMES THEY DO! WHY DO YOU ASK?
I THINK THERE'S ONE BEHIND YOU RIGHT NOW
YOU THERE! ARE YOU THE AMERICANIZED ILLEGITIMATE SHAME OF SPAIN--
EL AGUILA ?!
AS SURELY AS YOU MUST BE THE HAIRLESS CHESTED
--EL CONQUISTADOR!
I SWEAR, IT IS AS THOUGH YOU TWO REHEARSED!

STAND BACK, MISDALIA! I WILL DEAL A SWIFT AND MERCILESS JUSTICE TO HIM WHO PREYS UPON THE WEAK AND DEFENSELESS!
THAT'S JUST AS WELL. I DON'T THINK I COULD HAVE TAKEN HIM ON MY OWN.
I WAS BEING DRAMATIC
I KNOW. I WAS MAKING A JOKE.
THEN THAT IS WHERE I'LL MAIL YOUR REMAINS.. IN AN ENVELOPE!
THOOOM!
"THOOM!"? YOU'LL HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THAT, EFFENDI! ONCE I WAS NEARLY CRUSHED BY THE HULK, AND IT SOUNDED SOMETHING LIKE KAAKERAA-KACROOM!
IT WAS UNNECESSARY FOR ME TO PROGRAM MY COMPUTERS TO TRACK YOU DOWN.
ALL I NEEDED TO DO WAS LISTEN FOR YOUR LOUD EMPTY-MOUTHED THREATS AND LOOK FOR YOUR EVEN LOUDER COSTUME!
YOU ARE THE SECOND PERSON IN AS MANY MINUTES TO COMMENT ON MY ATTIRE
I'LL HAVE YOU BOTH KNOW THAT IN AMERICA, THIS IS CONSIDERED QUITE CHIC.
COUSIN, WHY DIDN'T YOU MENTION THAT CONQUISTADOR IS A MUTANT?
"MUTANT?"
FORGET IT
THIS WON'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE, WILL IT? SURELY IT WILL STILL BE A "PIECE OF PIE!"
CAKE. IT WILL BE A PIECE OF--

SMAKK!
--CAKE.
"EAGLE" THOUGH I MAY BE--
--I HAVE FLOWN ENOUGH THIS DAY!
SHOW YOURSELF, YOU FATHER TO A HERD OF GOATS!
HA! I KNEW YOU COULDN'T HAVE SUSPECTED I WOULD ERUPT FROM THE GROUND BENEATH YOUR FEET!
I HAD NARROWED IT DOWN TO THAT OR MY STOMACH WAS GROWLING MUCH LOUDER THAN USUAL.
RRUMMBLLE
YOU'RE QUICK-WITTED, I'LL GIVE YOU THAT! BUT WHAT WILL YOU SAY WHEN I USE MY MUTANT ABILITIES TO COMMAND THIS TREE TO REND YOU LIMB FROM LIMB?
PROBABLY SOMETHING LIKE, "OW! THAT HURTS!"
THAT BIO-ENERGY AURA THAT SURROUNDS HIS BODY-- IT SOMEHOW GIVES HIM THE ABILITY TO CONTROL THE VERY EARTH! I WONDER WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I DISRUPT IT WITH A BIO-BLAST OF MY OWN--
--LIKE THIS!
ARRRGH! THE PAIN IS UNBEARABLE!
GETTING A BIT DRAMATIC, AREN'T WE?

YOU WANT DRAMA?! HOW IS THIS -- THE MUTANT ABILITY TO MERGE WITH THE VERY EARTH ITSELF...
THE ABILITY TO CRUSH YOU WITH A SINGLE BLOW!
IMPRESSIVE! BUT IT DOESN'T HOLD A CANDLE TO MY INCREDIBLE ABILITY--
-- TO LEAP OUT OF THE WAY!
WUMP
WHICH IS NOTHING COMPARED TO MY ABILITY TO RUN FOR MY LIFE!
COME BACK HERE, YOU COWARD!
AND LET STICKS AND STONES BREAK MY BONES? I THINK NOT!
CAN THAT MONSTER BE RIGHT? HAS MY COUSIN BEEN DECEIVING US ALL ALONG? IS HE AS AFRAID AS THE REST OF US?
HA! WITHOUT YOUR SWORD YOU'RE EVEN LESS OF A THREAT THAN YOU WERE!
JUST KEEP BELIEVING THAT FOR A MOMENT MORE--
LOOK AT YOUR "DEFENDER" NOW, PEOPLE OF SAN ELAINA! SEE HOW HE FLEES LIKE AN ILL WIND!
AND WATCH ME AS I TEAR THIS VILLAGE APART! YOU WILL SERVE AS AN EXAMPLE TO OTHERS WHO DARE TO DEFY ME!
RRIP!
I DIDN'T REALIZE THIS WAS A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT. IF YOU'RE GOING TO START ON THE WINDMILL--
-- LET ME GIVE YOU A HAND!
NOW, LET'S SEE IF THIS WORKS! BY USING THE METAL GRATING OF THE WINDMILL AS A GROUND--

!
--IN COMBINATION WITH THE FULL POWER OF MY OWN BIO-BLASTS, AND--
ZZZZT
CARAMBA! I'VE NEVER LET LOOSE WITH SUCH RAW POWER BEFORE! I HOPE IT WAS ENOUGH TO STOP HIM, FOR I FEAR I DON'T HAVE THE STRENGTH TO CONTIN-- eh?
IF THAT WAS YOUR BEST SHOT, AGUILA -- FALL ON YOUR KNEES AND BEG FOR YOUR LIFE!
IF I DID, I'M AFRAID I'D STILL BE TALLER THAN YOU--
HAA-- WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
NO! THIS CANNOT BE! SOMEHOW YOUR BIO-BLAST HAS SEVERED MY BOND WITH THE PLANET! I HAVE RETURNED TO MY NORMAL FORM!
IF THAT IS "NORMAL," THEN I SUPPOSE IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT YOU ARE NEVER TO BOTHER THE PEOPLE OF THIS VILLAGE AGAIN-- AFTER YOU GET OUT OF JAIL!
er-- OF COURSE! BUT TELL ME-- HOW DID AN INSIGNIFICANT SWASHBUCKLING ADVENTURER LIKE YOU MANAGE TO DEFEAT A NEAR OMNIPOTENT EMBODIMENT OF A PRIMAL FORCE LIKE ME?!
:phhhha: IT WAS A PIECE OF CAKE!
THE END.

CLOAK
EL ÁGUILA
THE MAN-THING™